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ZUI RUEHPOD0229 1841036  
MESSAGE REJECTED - CONTAINS UNRECOGNIZED ORIGINATOR  
-- ERRORED MESSAGE FOLLOWS --  
RAAUZYUW RUEHPOD0229 1841036-UUUU--RHMCSUU.  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 031036Z JUL 07  
FM AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC  
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHPOD/AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PODGORICA 000229

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [MW](#)  
SUBJECT: ORGANIZED CRIME IN MONTENEGRO

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: A SMALL NUMBER OF ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS IN MONTENEGRO USE LINKS WITH GROUPS IN NEIGHBORING STATES AND ELSEWHERE TO EXPLOIT MONTENEGRO FOR THE TRANSIT OF SMUGGLED DRUGS, PEOPLE AND ARMS. THE GOM, LARGELY IN RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE, IS CONFRONTING THE CRIMINAL GROUPS MORE AGGRESSIVELY, AND HAS MOVED AGAINST CIGARETTE SMUGGLING, WHICH BLIGHTED MONTENEGROS REPUTATION DURING THE 1990S ERA OF WAR AND SANCTIONS. PUBLICITY IN MAY SURROUNDING POLICE AND SECURITY AGENCY "DOSSIERS" ON CRIMINALS DREW ATTENTION BACK TO THE PROBLEM. PM ZELJKO STURANOVIC HAS STATED THAT FIGHTING CORRUPTION, ORGANIZED CRIME, AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IS A PRIORITY FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, MONTENEGRO'S CAPACITY TO EFFECTIVELY PREVENT, MONITOR, PROSECUTE AND TRY CRIMINAL CASES REMAINS LIMITED. END SUMMARY.

REGISTER OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES IN MONTENEGRO

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12. (U) ON MAY 8, LOCAL MEDIA EXTENSIVELY REPORTED ON RUMORS ALLEGING THE EXISTENCE OF A REGISTER OF CRIMINAL ACTORS OR GROUPS IN MONTENEGRO. THE REGISTER IS REPORTEDLY MAINTAINED BY THE AGENCIJA ZA NACIONALNU BEZBJEDNOST (ANB), WHICH WAS SPLIT OFF FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE POLICE IN 2005.

13. (SBU) DRUGS: THE "SECRET" ANB REGISTER, ACCORDING TO THE MEDIA, SAID SEVERAL ORGANIZED GROUPS IN MONTENEGRO THAT DEAL MAINLY IN DRUGS AND ARMS SMUGGLING ARE CONNECTED WITH CRIMINALS FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, WESTERN EUROPE AND SOUTH AMERICA. (N.B.: POST NOTES HOWEVER THAT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY HERE BELIEVES THE FORMERLY THRIVING AND CLOSE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ITALIAN ORGANIZED CRIME AND MONTENEGRO HAS DWINDLED SIGNIFICANTLY. AND THERE IS VERY LITTLE EVEN ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE ON THE SCALE OF THE PRESENCE OF RUSSIAN ORGANIZED CRIME IN MONTENEGRO, IN SPITE OF THE ARREST OF FIVE RUSSIANS FOR ATTEMPTING TO MOVE LARGE AMOUNTS

OF UNDECLARED CURRENCY. END NOTE.) ANB BELIEVES THAT MOST DRUGS TRANSIT MONTENEGRO FROM ALBANIA, AFGHANISTAN, TURKEY, AND SOUTH AMERICA, WITH THE MAJORITY OF DRUGS EXPORTED TO WESTERN EUROPE; ONLY A SMALL PORTION REMAINS IN THE LOCAL MARKET. COCAINE IS TRANSPORTED TO MONTENEGRO FROM SOUTH AMERICA, WHILE HEROIN COMES FROM AFGHANISTAN, TURKEY AND ALBANIA. MARIJUANA LARGELY ORIGINATES IN ALBANIA. ANB ASSERTS THAT MONTENEGRIN CRIMINALS ARE PART OF A CHAIN OF LARGE DRUG TRANSFERS GOING TO SERBIA, REPUBLIKA SRPSKA, BIH, CROATIA AND WESTERN EUROPE.

14. (U) EVEN THOUGH 70% OF THE DRUGS THAT ENTER MONTENEGRO ARE TRANSHIPPED TO OTHER COUNTRIES, MONTENEGRO CONFRONTS A GROWING DRUG ABUSE PROBLEM. FIFTY PERCENT OF PRISON INMATES WERE CONVICTED FOR DRUG-RELATED CRIMES. DOMESTIC ABUSE IS LARGELY OF MARIJUANA, WITH SOME ABUSE OF COCAINE AND HEROIN REPORTED. SMALL QUANTITIES OF ECSTASY AND OTHER SYNTHETIC DRUGS ARE IMPORTED FROM SERBIA, WITH MORE SMUGGLING AND USE DURING THE SUMMER TOURISM SEASON.

15. (U) WEAPONS: SOME CRIMINAL GROUPS ARE SPORADICALLY ENGAGED IN SMUGGLING WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVE DEVICES, ACCORDING TO MEDIA REPORTING ON THE ANB REPORT. THE RUGGED TERRAIN IN THE REGION IS IDEAL FOR SMUGGLING. ANB BELIEVES THAT WEAPONS SMUGGLING GOES THROUGH THE SAME CHANNELS, CONDUCTED BY THE SAME PERSONS, AS THE TRANSFER OF NARCOTICS; OCCASIONALLY, WEAPONS ARE TRADED FOR DRUGS. THE WEAPONS, MAINLY COMING FROM THE REPUBLIKA SRPSKA (IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) OR STOLEN FROM THE INSTALLATIONS OF THE FORMER STATE UNION MILITARY, ARE SMUGGLED FROM MONTENEGRO TO ALBANIA MAINLY BY LAND ROUTES, AND ACROSS SKADAR LAKE.

16. (U) ILLEGAL MIGRATION: ILLEGAL MIGRANTS ALSO CROSS MONTENEGRO INTO WESTERN EUROPE, ACCORDING TO MEDIA STORIES ON THE ANB REPORT. ORGANIZERS ARE CRIMINAL GROUPS FROM THE REGION, OR FROM WESTERN EUROPE, WITH MONTENEGRIN CRIMINALS INTEGRATED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK. ANB STATES THAT AFTER ARRIVING IN MONTENEGRO, MIGRANTS GET IN TOUCH WITH MONTENEGRIN CONTACTS THAT PROVIDE THEM TEMPORARY SHELTER IN THEIR HOMES OR OTHER FACILITIES. THEY ARE THEN TRANSPORTED TOWARD THE BOSNIAN BORDER WHERE THEY TRY TO CROSS OVER MOUNTAIN AND FOREST TRACKS WITH ASSISTANCE OF THE LOCAL GUIDES. MIGRANTS COME TO MONTENEGRO FROM ALBANIA THROUGH KOSOVO. THE ILLEGAL MIGRANTS ARE MAINLY KOSOVAR ALBANIANS AND CITIZENS OF ALBANIA, TURKEY, AND ROMANIA.

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17. (SBU) TIP: NATIONAL ANTI-TIP COORDINATOR OBRENOVIC TOLD POLOFF ON JUNE 11 THAT HE AGREED WITH THE LATEST USG TIP REPORT WHEN IT STATED THAT "LOW-LEVEL CORRUPTION AMONG POLICE AND CUSTOMS OFFICIALS ... ALLOWS SOME TRAFFICKERS TO EVADE LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS." IOM COUNTRY OFFICE DIRECTOR ZIVKOVIC HAS REQUESTED USG SUPPORT FOR IOM EFFORTS TO HAVE THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE ESTABLISH BETTER METHODS TO IDENTIFY TIP VICTIMS.

18. (U) CAR THEFT: DURING THE 1990S MONTENEGRO WAS INFAMOUS AS THE DESTINATION FOR MANY STOLEN VEHICLES OR VEHICLES "REMOVED FROM INSURANCE" -- TONGUE IN CHEEK, THE TOURISM SLOGAN "WELCOME TO MONTENEGRO, YOUR CAR IS ALREADY HERE" WAS PROPOSED. IN A JUST A FEW YEARS, MONTENEGRO "IMPORTED" SOME 55,000 USED VEHICLES FROM WESTERN EUROPE. SINCE 2003 NEW PROCEDURES, FACILITATED BY BETTER COOPERATION WITH WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS, HAVE MANDATED THAT THE TITLE AND PRIOR REGISTRATION, INCLUDING VIN,

OF ALL IMPORTED VEHICLES IS RIGIDLY CHECKED BEFORE BEING REGISTERED IN MONTENEGRO.

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF CRIME

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19. (U) THE MEDIA STATES THAT THE ANB REPORT POSITS EIGHT CRIMINAL CLANS IN MONTENEGRO: PODGORICA, BAR, AND ROZAJE HAVE TWO EACH; NIKSIC AND BERANE HAVE ONE EACH. (A CONTEMPORANEOUS MONTENEGRIN POLICE REPORT CLAIMS SEVEN CLANS: TWO IN BAR, ONE IN EACH OF BUDVA, KOTOR, PODGORICA, NIKSIC AND BERANE, ALSO ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS.) ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE ANB CHARACTERIZES THE CLANS AS FOLLOWS:

-- PODGORICA: THE TWO CLANS ARE INVOLVED IN THE SMUGGLING OF NARCOTICS, WEAPONS AND EXPENSIVE CARS ACROSS THE BORDER, WITH NARCOTICS GOING TO (AND THROUGH MONTENEGRO), WEAPONS FLOWING INTO ALBANIA, AND CARS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. THEY ARE CONNECTED WITH CRIMINAL GROUPS IN SERBIA, CROATIA, BOSNIA, KOSOVO AND ALBANIA. MEHMED BELA DJOKOVIC (NFI) IS MENTIONED AS HAVING A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE ILLEGAL TRANSFER OF ALBANIANS FROM ALBANIA AND KOSOVO TOWARDS WESTERN EUROPE AND THE U.S., AND HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN CONVICTED AND SENTENCED SEVERAL TIMES ABROAD.

-- BAR: MONTENEGRO'S PORT. THESE CLANS ARE REPORTEDLY THE LARGEST AND BEST ORGANIZED, PRINCIPALLY INVOLVED IN THE SMUGGLING AND SALE OF COCAINE. THE LEADERSHIP IS ACCUSED OF THE MURDER OF FORMER POLICE CHIEF SLAVOLJUB SCEKIC.

-- NIKSIC: MOSTLY ORIENTED TO SMUGGLING WITH THE REPUBLIKA SRSPKA.

-- ROZAJE: VERY POWERFUL FINANCIALLY, AND CONNECTED TO CRIMINAL STRUCTURES IN KOSOVO, THEY ARE CENTRALLY INVOLVED IN THE SMUGGLING OF HEROIN FROM AFGHANISTAN AND TURKEY. LEAD FIGURE IS SAFET KALIC, FROM ROZAJE (NFI).

-- BERANE: CONNECTED TO CRIMINAL GANGS BASED IN BELGRADE. THE PRESS RECENTLY WROTE THAT MANY CRIMINALS FROM BERANE WERE INVOLVED IN DRUGS SMUGGLING IN SCANDINAVIA.

#### ORGANISED CRIME AND TERRORISM

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10. (U) THE TRIAL OF A CRIMINAL GROUP, DRAWN FROM THE CRIMINAL CLAN IN BAR, FOR THE AUGUST 2005 MURDER OF NATIONAL POLICE CHIEF SLAVOLJUB SCEKIC, HAS RECENTLY BEGUN. AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, SCEKIC WAS INVESTIGATING SEVERAL HIGH-PROFILE ORGANISED CRIME ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THE MURDER OF OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER EDITOR

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DUSKO JOVANOVIC IN MAY 2004. (THE ONLY SUSPECT ARRESTED IN THE

JOVANOVIC CASE WAS ACQUITTED IN DECEMBER 2006.) THE TRIAL OF 18 ETHNIC ALBANIANS ARRESTED IN SEPTEMBER 2006 ON CHARGES OF PLOTTING TERRORIST ACCTIVITIES IS ALSO IN PROGRESS.

¶11. (U) WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY TO THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR CHARGED TO FIGHT ORGANISED CRIME, THE CAPACITY OF THIS OFFICE IS BEING STRENGTHENED. MONTENEGRO COOPERATES CLOSELY WITH INTERPOL. MONTENEGRO SIGNED MEMORANDA OF COOPERATION IN FIGHTING ALL FORMS OF CRIME AND TERRORISM WITH AUSTRIA, ALBANIA, BULGARIA, UNMIK, SERBIA, CROATIA AND THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, AS WELL AS WITH ITALY.

## COUNTRY ACTIONS AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME AND CORRUPTION

### LEGISLATIVE MEASURES

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¶12. (U) FOLLOWING THE ADOPTION IN 2005 OF THE STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND ORGANISED CRIME, MONTENEGRO ADOPTED IN AUGUST 2006 THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY. ON MARCH 16, 2007, THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN STARTED TO OPERATE. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION IS DEPUTY PM GORDANA DJUROVIC, AND HER DEPUTY IS MINISTER OF INTERIOR JUSUF KALAMPEROVIC. THE OPERATIONAL HEAD IS THE CHIEF OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE, FORMER DEPUTY JUSTICE MINISTER VESNA RATKOVIC (NOTE: BETWEEN THESE TWO GOM POSITIONS, MS. RATKOVIC WAS USAID'S RULE OF LAW SPECIALIST). MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ARE THE MINISTERS OF FINANCE AND JUSTICE; THE PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT; POLICE DIRECTOR VESELIN VUKOTIC; VANJA CALOVIC, THE RESPECTED AND OUTSPOKEN HEAD OF A WATCHDOG NGO; CHIEF STATE PROSECUTOR VESNA MEDENICA; AND HEADS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS.

¶13. (SBU) THE STRUCTURE OF THE 2007 BUDGET MAKES FUNDING OF THE JUDICIARY VULNERABLE TO POLITICAL INFLUENCE. THE EU AND OTHERS HAVE URGED THE GOM TO MAKE THE JUDICIARY FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT, AS A MAJOR STEP IN STRENGTHENING THE RULE OF LAW AND FIGHTING CORRUPTION. THERE HAVE BEEN NO POLICE ACTIONS OR LEGAL TRIALS AGAINST MID-LEVEL OR SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FOR ORGANIZED CRIME AND CORRUPTION.

### AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES

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¶14. (U) MONTENEGRO HAS RATIFIED THE UN CONVENTION AGAINST COURRUPTION, THE UN CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME, THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON FIGHTING TERRORISM, AND BECAME A MEMBER OF THE IOM ON NOVEMBER 2006. MONTENEGRO HAS ACCEPTED THE THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF ACTS OF NUCLEAR TERRORISM. MONTENEGRO WORKS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS BILATERALLY AND IN REGIONAL INITIATIVES TO COMBAT ORGANIZED CRIME AND TRAFFICKING, AND IS SIGNATORY TO THE NEW SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS (SEECp) AND THE SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE COOPERATIVE INITIATIVE (SECI).

### ACCESSION TO INTERPOL

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¶15. (U) MONTENEGRO JOINED INTERPOL AS ITS 185TH MEMBER IN SEPTEMBER 2006. BEGINNING IN 2001, MONTENEGRO HAD BEEN CONNECTED TO INTERPOL'S HEADQUARTERS IN LYON, FRANCE, THROUGH BELGRADE. THE MEDIA REPORT THAT NINE MONTENEGRIN CITIZENS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED ABROAD, UNDER ARREST WARRANTS ISSUED BY THE MONTENEGRIN POLICE, SINCE MONTENEGRO JOINED INTERPOL. ONE OF THEM, ANDRIJA PEKIC, IS EXPECTED TO BE EXTRADITED TO MONTENEGRO FROM THE U.S.

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PEKIC HAD BEEN CONVICTED IN ABSENTIA OF RAPE AND SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS IN PRISON.

BORDER MANAGEMENT  
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¶16. (U) WITH SMUGGLING A MAJOR FACTOR IN ORGANIZED CRIME, BORDER SECURITY HAS A PROMINENT ROLE. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TOOK CONTROL OF MONTENEGRO'S SHARE OF THE STATE UNION'S BORDERS FROM THE ARMY IN 2003. THE ELEVEN BORDER CROSSINGS HAVE BEEN RECONSTRUCTED, WITH USG (NINE) AND EU (TWO) SUPPORT. CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES HAS BEEN UPGRADED. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS WAS COMPLETED BY THE ADOPTION OF THE LAW ON THE STATE BORDER IN NOVEMBER 2005. A STRATEGY ON INTEGRATED BORDER MANAGEMENT (IBM) WAS ADOPTED IN FEBRUARY 2006, ALTHOUGH COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FOUR MAIN BODIES (MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, CUSTOMS, VETERINARY SERVICE, PHYTO-SANITARY SERVICE) CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY NEEDS IMPROVEMENT.

COMMENT  
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¶17. (SBU) "CORRUPTION AND ORGANIZED CRIME" IS A UNITARY PHRASE IN MONTENEGRO, IN PART BECAUSE IT IS A FAVORITE THEME OF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION. HOWEVER, THIS IS AN INCREASINGLY IMPRECISE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE SITUATION. HISTORICALLY, ORGANIZED CRIME ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY MEANT SMUGGLING THROUGH MONTENEGRO. THAT PHENOMENON MADE IT EASY FOR OFFICIALS TO LOOK AWAY, OR EVEN SUPPORT, CRIMINAL ACTIVITY - ESPECIALLY IN THE 1990S WHEN MONTENEGRO WAS OTHERWISE POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY ISOLATED THROUGH WARTIME SANCTIONS. THE MURDERS OF A PROMINENT EDITOR IN 2004, AND OF THE POLICE CHIEF IN 2005, PROBABLY BY LOCAL ORGANIZED CRIME FIGURES, ALTERED SOME PERCEPTIONS. INCREASINGLY INTERNAL PRESSURE, AFTER MONTENEGRIN INDEPENDENCE, AND IN CONNECTION WITH ITS BIDS FOR EU (AND NATO) MEMBERSHIP, HAVE ALSO RAISED THE CONCERNS ABOUT (ILLEGAL) BUSINESS AS USUAL.

¶18. (SBU) EVEN WITH INCREASED POLITICAL WILL, MONTENEGRO IS HAMSTRUNG IN ATTACKING ORGANIZED CRIME. IT IS ONLY RECENTLY, AND ONLY WITH OUTSIDE (PRIMARILY USG) HELP, THAT MONTENEGRO HAS EVEN THE RUDIMENTS OF THE LEGISLATION, EQUIPMENT, AND TRAINING NEEDED TO INVESTIGATE AND PROSECUTE ORGANIZED CRIME. ADDITIONALLY HAMPERING THE FIGHT IS MONTENEGRO'S SMALL AND CLOSE-KNIT SOCIETY, WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO STRIKE HARD AND WITHOUT NOTICE AT MAJOR CRIME OPERATIONS. STRONGER GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY MEASURES WILL HELP BREAK THE CASUAL LINKS BETWEEN

CRIME CLANS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, BY EXPOSING UNEXPECTED  
WEALTH, AND INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF DECISION MAKING.

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